

has been a leader on that. We don't want to disregard his concerns and recognize that he has a legitimate concern but the other side of the coin is this, if you don't have a salary increase in this area, you have real problems in terms of morale. You have real problems in terms of direction for state employees. And we are not talking just about state agencies, we are talking about university and state colleges as well. I think if we go a year without salary increases at this point, despite the hard times that we have, we recognize that, we have a situation where we are going to lose some people, some good people, because, again, it sends a message even if it is only 3 percent salary increase, it sends a message that we care about their work, we recognize the benefit of their work and want to reward them for that effort. And we had a pay plan, LB 1022, a number of you co-sponsored with me to try and again set up a system where we provide reward and incentive for people to stay with state government, to stay in agencies, continue the work that they have, use that expertise and experience and build on it for our state. We didn't proceed with that but we have to recognize this state must reward those employees for their longevity and for their work and for their service to the state and the 3 percent increase is a small step in that direction, as Senator Warner said, an 8 percent increase and that survey is what we are talking about, and, frankly, you don't save money when you have no increase in salary. You eventually have to keep up with the marketplace and if you don't do it this year, it just means you have to have a bigger increase next year and it is no easier at any point. Any time we talk about salary increases, it always seems like, well, things will get better next year and the budget always, hopefully, will improve in the future and it never does. And we haven't done this and I am glad we haven't. If we did start to put off these salary increases until things got better, they would never have a salary increase and that is just the fact of the matter. We just have ended up in a situation where the times have not gotten better and we don't anticipate that they are going to get better in terms of the rural area of the state, but still we must be compatible in salaries. We must recognize we must retain those employees. We must show them some hope for staying in service in state government. We must give them a future to be in state government because to utilize that talent that they have and experience is in our best interests as well as theirs. And I am particularly, as I said, concerned about the university